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Design: J. Roberts & P. Bromley



Publisher & Senior Editor - Joseph Roberts
Comptroller - Rajesh Chawla
Managing Editor - Sonya Weir
Design & Production - www.perublesky.ca

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Common Ground Publishing Corp.
 204-4381 Fraser St.
 Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4 Canada

100% owned and operated by Canadians.
 Published 12 times a year in Canada.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40011171
 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
 Circulation Dept. 204-4381 Fraser St.
 Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4
 ISSN No. 0824-0698

Copies printed: 70,000
 Over 250,000 readers per issue
 Survey shows 3 to 4 readers/copy.

Annual subscription is \$60 (US\$50) for one year (12 issues). Single issues are \$6 (specify issue #). Payable by cheque, Visa, MasterCard, Interac or money order.

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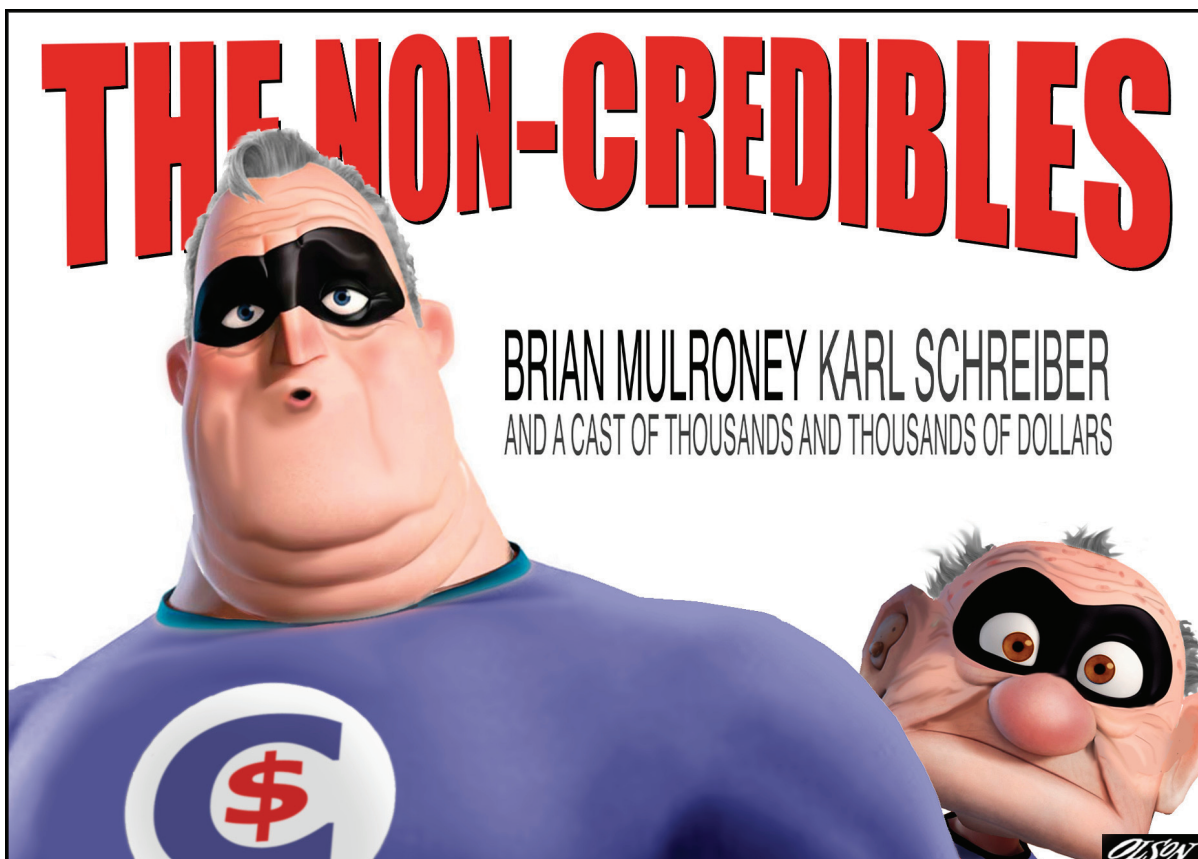
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Thank you Arthur Erickson

Arthur Charles Erickson
1924-2009

by Bruce Bingham

ON MAY 20, 2009, we lost a great friend with the passing of Arthur Erickson. He will be missed not only in Vancouver, but also throughout the rest of Canada and the world village where he sailed on the high seas of life's creative flow to bring back gifts of time, space, form and humanity. This incredible man saw always that we are never separate from nature, but that we are part of nature herself.

Always the gracious diplomat with a ready laugh, wide grin and sparkle in his eye, he saw the best in each of us and when it displeased him to see the ignorant actions of those less disposed to grace, he stood his ground without concession. At all times, he was a hard, hard worker and he would never compromise his standards of excellence. He knew all was possible. He knew you could do it. He always admonished others to just try, take the next step, reach for what you know and see beyond expected limits. He knew that everyone had the same potential and with generous humility, he gave his full support to others to dream, to become and to realize their highest aspirations.

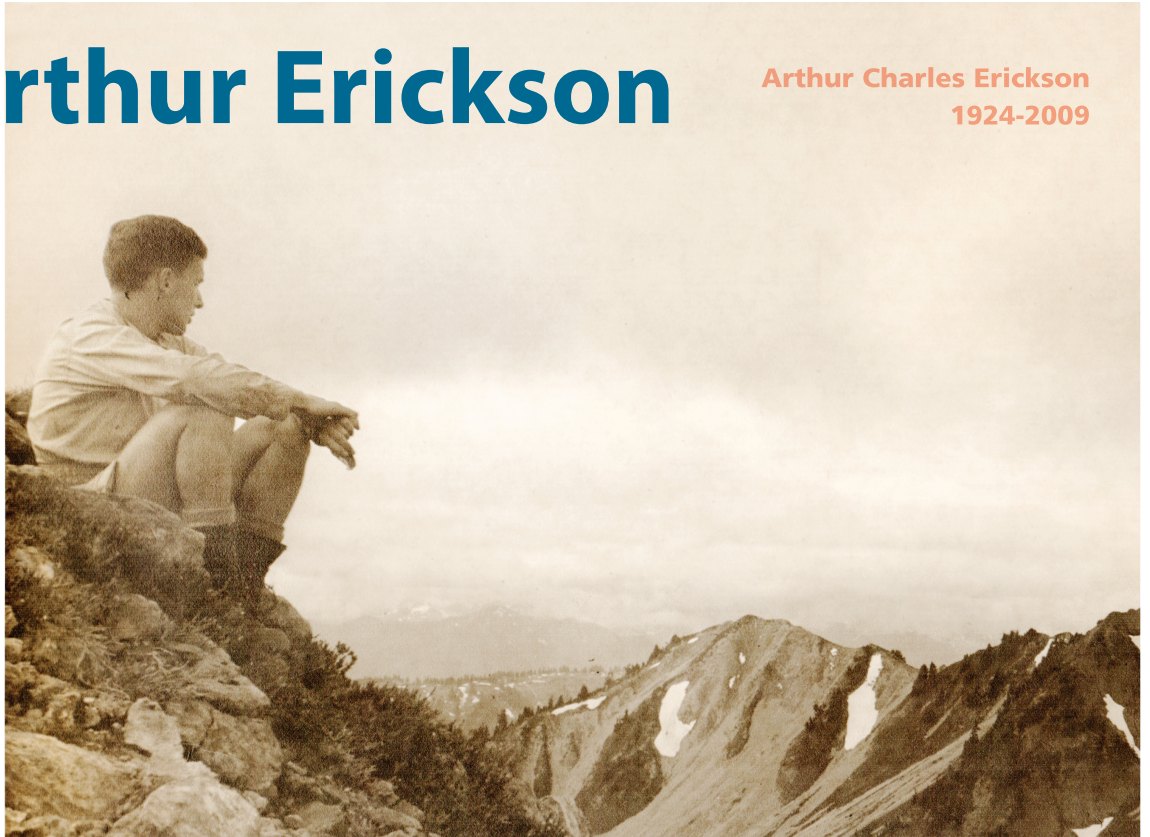
The foundation for his immense success was his family and the many dear friends he made along the way. His father was a war hero who lost both legs at the battle of Amiens, but survived WW1 to be decorated by King George V at Buckingham Palace. He returned to Canada where he married Arthur's beloved mother Moppy. The family, including Arthur's brother who is a writer, lived on Vancouver's West Side.

Poppy Erickson's strength of character, fierce determination, self-sufficiency and love instilled in Arthur and Don a marked self-reliance, confidence and highly developed social conscience that set them apart. From a young age, they both possessed a sense of self-awareness. Their beloved mother recognized she had two beautiful and exceptional kids and nurtured their aesthetic virtuosity and self-confidence. The boys grew up knowing they could reach for the best and achieve their dreams, held tightly by values of family, community and the sacredness of life.

Even in today's changing social landscape, the Ericksons' deep family bond extends across three living generations. They still share Sunday dinner together and Arthur was always present unless the busy pace of his work designing extraordinarily beautiful buildings – for people to live, work and grow in – and extensive travels prohibited him. When he returned home to Vancouver, however, he always remembered to bring back gifts for his beloved niece, nephews and their parents – gifts from afar that were fun, exotic and beautiful.

As they grew up, Arthur was a constant inspiration to the little ones in his family. He loved their individual natures and helped direct them to seek their own rewarding and fulfilling lives. He taught them to ski, to draw, observe and to play. He was a joy to them and they to him. They too went on to become creative professionals in architecture, interior design and writing.

The other foundation for Arthur's genius was rooted in the way he saw the world in all its glory and beauty,



Arthur Erickson Diamond Head area. Circa 1942. Photo by Mary White.

inspired by nature's spirit and grand design. He was gifted as a painter with an instinctive sense of form, colour, texture and nature. Undeniably, the natural beauty of Vancouver keyed him to an appreciation of the mountains, forests and seas and he was encouraged by personal friends who were cultural lions, including Lawren Harris, Jack Shadbolt, Gordon Smith and Bill Reid.

Arthur had the innate ability to connect directly to the voice and forms of Spirit's intelligence. He saw the connections, the momentary signs, glints and signals that connected all the dots and made the landscape of the world whole, visceral and inspired. Nature reached out to him in special and intimate ways and he never failed to grasp its climate and terrain.

His cottage home on Vancouver's West Side, with its secluded gardens is the quintessence of Arthur. Even a pair of wild Mallards – there are three generations of them now – felt his love and appreciation of life and nature's genius and have returned annually to his cottage in the urban wilderness of Vancouver adding, along with the frogs, to the natural and harmonious surroundings.

Arthur loved life and its natural beauty immensely and inspired by that beauty, he shared his joy and happiness with others. He lifted up his friends. He brought out their individual greatness and inspired them to know and express much more of their own intelligence. He embraced happiness and extended it to others of all ranks and stations of life without prejudice, whether it was life-long friends, new and younger friends or prime ministers, kings and princesses. They all received his honesty and respect equally, dispensed with humility, good humour and wisdom. He was a gentleman.

Arthur was a great Canadian light to the world. He represents the best of us as a nation and as a people. He encompassed our great country's values of social conscience, dignity for all and wide and visceral love of nature's grandeur, imbued with sophisticated, cultural

acumen. Those who know, say he is the greatest Canadian architect of the 20th century. He stood firmly against the worst of humanity's inclinations. Ever ready to put his name and reputation to a worthy cause, he spoke candidly. He saw hypocrisy and deplored its fine garments. He worked to preserve our neighbourhoods and aesthetic values. His call to do what is right is a trait he shares with his family members.

Arthur's inspired architecture brought forth a new understanding of how we and our dwelling places must be one with our surroundings. His design genius, including roof gardens, works to preserve nature. He created and established the design concepts for dwelling places that are the physical stage from which the young going forward into the world today can draw connectedness, inspiration and understanding from our bond with nature, rather than imagining we are separate from it.

This singular, brilliant insight – how we all reside in form and nature – will serve to save us.

The Great Spirit did a grand job of creating Arthur; we thank you Arthur for your love and your gifts.

Bruce Bingham is a friend of the Erickson family. He has worked at the leading edge of new industries in BC for many years and has made significant contributions to the protection of the environment, justice and human rights.



Arthur Erickson at home
Photo by Robert Kenney
July 15, 2007. Courtesy of the
Arthur Erickson Conservancy
www.arthurerickson.com

Design achievements

(partial list)

Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC
Museum of Anthropology, UBC
Provincial Law Courts, Vancouver
Pavillion, International Trade Fair, Tokyo
Canadian Chancery, Washington, D.C.
Etisalat Tower, Dubai
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HEALTH

Healthcare thrives on conflicts of interest

Corrupt medical research only the tip of the iceberg

DRUG BUST Alan Cassels

WE TRUST strongly in our medical system because, metaphorically speaking, we largely don't mix church and state. For the most part, the medical care we receive from our hospitals and doctors is supported by public funds and delivered on the basis of human goodness, charity and justice. Examples that show how strenuous we are in ensuring that commerce doesn't taint our medical care include:

- We don't let doctors sell drugs; pharmacists do that.
- We don't let drug companies run medical schools; universities do that.
- We don't let drug manufacturers write prescribing guidelines for physicians; independent experts do that.
- And we don't let people selling drugs or medical devices write medical journal articles; academic physicians do that.

Or, at least, that's what I thought.

April was a particularly hard month for rude awakenings. Cracks in the crumbling edifice between commerce and medicine were revealed and new research unveiled gross, sometimes shocking, levels of conflicts of interest in our medical system. We are finding evidence of academic doctors selling themselves to the highest bidders, medical journals allowing themselves to be prostituted by drug companies and medical schools allowing doctors in residence to be bribed with drug company trinkets. I would argue that of all the factors threatening to undermine our trust in medicine, financial conflicts of interest top the list.

Don't believe me? Then believe the data: In April, four separate research studies published in four diverse areas showed the widespread and rampant nature of conflicts of interest in medicine. One derives from the world of cancer research. One is from psychiatry. One is from medical education and the last is from the world of medical journals. As you absorb these examples, try to decide for yourself if we are doing enough as a

society to eliminate the conflicts of interest infecting medicine.

What do I mean by conflict of interest? Wikipedia generally defines it as "any situation in which an individual or corporation (either private or governmental) is in a position to exploit a professional or official capacity in some way for their personal or corporate benefit."

One study from the cancer world examined the frequency and impact of conflicts of interest as they related to high-impact, published, clinical cancer research. It basically asked the question: "Are researchers who publish in cancer journals conflicted?" (For instance, do they own shares or have stock in or otherwise benefit financially from their association with a drug manufacturer or do they work for the drug company whose drug they are studying?) The reviewers looked at cancer research published in eight major journals in 2006 to see if conflicts of interest were reported and, if so, who funded the research? They also wanted to discern if there is a real association between the research funders and what the research concludes (i.e. do the industry-sponsored researchers have more positive things to say about their sponsor's drug than the researchers not on industry's payroll?)

Their results? Out of 1,534 original oncology studies, almost a third (29 percent) of the researchers had a conflict of interest, including industry funding, yet only 17 percent declared they had received such funding. Studies paid for by industry funding were twice as likely to focus on treatments (as opposed to other aspects of cancer care) and randomized trials that assessed survival were more likely to report positive survival outcomes when there was an obvious conflict of interest. In other words, the drug is shown to "work" better if there is company money involved.

The authors concluded there are indeed conflicts of interest in the clinical cancer research published in high-impact journals; often, those conflicts are not disclosed and the conflicts result in a more

positive spin being put on the results of the trial.

The next example comes from the world of mental illness. A report by Boston researchers found that 90 percent of the authors of three American Psychiatric Association (APA) clinical practice guidelines in psychiatry had financial ties to companies that manufacture drugs mentioned in those guidelines. Worse yet, the authors had financial connections, including owning equity in the companies that made the recommended medications, being a consultant or corporate board member, or receiving honoraria. None of these conflicts were disclosed in the guideline.

Translation: The academics who wrote the major guidelines for American physicians on treating serious mental illness – schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression – were basically all funded by the drug companies. If you thought only well meaning psychiatrists, interested in the welfare of patients, provided the guidelines, you'd be wrong. The picture looks even darker when you narrow in on the conflicts of interest of the authors of the guidelines for only bipolar disorder and schizophrenia: Here, 100 percent of the authors had such conflicts. Most people would consider these findings very worrisome, including Tufts University professor Sheldon Krimsky, one of the co-authors of this report. Tufts published a 2006 study examining conflicts of interest of the creators of psychiatry's "Bible," the *DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)*.

In a telephone interview with Krimsky from his office in Boston, he told me we should be worried about conflicts of

the first place. At the very least, groups like the APA should admit they've got a huge potential PR liability on their hands, and if they don't prevent drug companies from putting their own people on guideline committees, the APA shouldn't be surprised when our doctors scorn or ignore their guidance.

What about smaller things than prescribing guidelines? What about trinkets – do they influence what our physicians think about drug companies? A recent study conducted in two medical schools in the US found that exposure to even small pharmaceutical items affected a doctor's treatment preferences.

You might

find this hard to believe. Most physicians I know scorn the idea that they could be "bought" with trinkets. (We're talking drug company pens, free drug samples and other logo-laden paraphernalia.)

Most physicians are adamant that these small, promotional items are unlikely to influence prescribing behaviour. Yet, in this study, the researchers measured whether exposure to these items result in doctors looking more favourably on drug companies and whether or not the medical schools with more restrictive policies towards pharmaceutical marketing produce doctors with different attitudes.

Researchers conducted a randomized, controlled experiment with more than 300 senior level medical stu-



Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria and author of The ABCs of Disease Mongering

students where the opposite effect was observed. Basically, those students not marinating in drug company promotion were less swayed by promotional items related to the drug.

The authors concluded "subtle exposure to small, pharmaceutical, promotional items influences implicit attitudes toward marketed products among medical students."

A study published in April by Sergio Sismondo at Queens University in Kingston looked at the relationship between drug companies and medical journals and asked, "Are medical researchers and medical journals too close to the pharma-

ceutical industry for comfort – or patient safety?"

We've all heard of the phenomenon of "ghostwriting" where big, important names in medical academia are asked to put their names to papers written by others (often drug company hacks). But Sismondo pushes the concept a bit further referring to the "ghost management" of pharmaceutical research and publication where cradle-to-grave medical publishing is "managed" every step of the way by pharma funders. He notes there has always been a problem with plagiarism and the misallocation of credit (like the prof who puts his own name on the hard work of his graduate students), but those scenarios are only the tip of the iceberg.

A more serious problem in medical publishing is the pharmaceutical industry using "willing participants" in the form of researchers seeking fame, glory and money associated with huge, multimillion-dollar studies. These people, known in the marketing world as KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders), are luminaries who put their names to the body of academic published research and serve as speakers and *de facto* promoters of the company's products. They put their names to studies that are published according to the objectives of the funders (usually the drug companies). The published studies are then reprinted and distributed to the offices of physicians and anyone else who influences drug formularies.

As Sismondo says, "Those articles may look like independent confirmation of the reps' pitches [and] plagiarizing KOLs lend their good names to the pitches."

If you were to ask me if conflicts of interest are a problem in medicine, I'd say, "Ask the data and then decide for yourself."

Alan Cassels is the co-author of the bestselling Selling Sickness. He does not work for the pharmaceutical industry.

We are finding evidence of academic doctors selling themselves to the highest bidders, medical journals allowing themselves to be prostituted by drug companies and medical schools allowing doctors in residence to be bribed with drug company trinkets.

interest because they can lead to a "distortion of the scientific record" and that industry-funded activities may lead to an "interpretation of the science in a direction that may not be defensible."

While he'd like to see these guidelines do a much better job of disclosing conflicts of interests among the authors, such disclosure is only an intermediate step towards erecting a solid firewall between drug companies and guidelines for physicians. "The innovators must be separate from the evaluators," he notes. That's right, a separation of church and state.

No doubt guideline committees, such as those sponsored by the APA, need to come clean about their financial conflicts, but they must go further to avoid them in

dents at two US medical schools. One of the schools (University of Miami) allowed the students to be exposed to small, branded promotional items for the cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor (atorvastatin). The control group was comprised of students at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine where restrictive policies are in place to limit pharmaceutical marketing.

What did they find? The Miami students exposed to the Lipitor swag were obviously more enamoured with the drug compared to the control group in Pennsylvania. On a "skepticism" scale, the Miami students held more favourable attitudes toward pharmaceutical marketing compared with the other group of



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Fast food for health

NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina MS, RD

SCHOOL'S out (or will be soon) and bathing suit time is here. Who wants to be indoors cooking? Not me. Probably not you. Fast food may have a bad name, but the truth is that healthy eating can be quick *and* tasty. Here are a few food ideas that will appeal to all ages and which are simple for anyone to prepare.

Burgers

Stock the freezer with several types of veggie burger. Serve them on a whole-wheat roll, accompanied with relish, tomatoes, barbecue sauce, tomatoes, pickles and lettuce.

Taco salad

Toss together greens, such as chopped romaine or other lettuce; chopped tomato; chopped red, white or green onion; rinsed, canned black beans; defrosted corn; and some cubes of avocado. Dress the salad with a little olive oil and lime or lemon juice. Serve with a handful of tortilla chips.

Nori rolls and edamame

Supermarkets stock a variety of nori rolls (including vegetarian) and edamame (baby soybeans, usually marinated) in their deli sections. These are also available as takeout items from Japanese restaurants. The combination makes an excellent grab-and-go dinner or fare for the beach.

Orange banana whirl

For a refreshing energy booster, place a banana and one and two-third cups of orange juice in a blender and process until smooth and creamy. If you'd like, include a touch of vanilla and use calcium-fortified juice.

Five-day salad

Makes 20 cups

Would you or your family members eat more salad if it were ready-made? A good trick is to assemble a huge salad each week. It's then ready when you are. Removing excess moisture makes the salad last longer, so use a salad spinner or shake or pat the lettuce leaves dry. Mix it in a large container, such as a metal bowl with a 14-inch diameter. Store in one or two large, well-sealed containers (such as Tupperware) and it will keep for four or five days. For freshness, do not include red pepper in your stored salad; add it just before serving. Serve the salad with a favourite dressing.

5 large leaves kale

5 large leaves romaine lettuce

5 leaves Napa (Chinese) cabbage

1/4 head red cabbage

1 large stalk broccoli

1/2 small head cauliflower

3 - 4 carrots

1 sweet red pepper (optional)

Remove stem from kale and chop matchstick thin. Tear or cut lettuce into bite-size pieces. Cut Napa cabbage leaves in half lengthwise and slice into 1/4-inch strips. Slice red cabbage into thin slices. Cut broccoli and cauliflower into bite-size florets. Broccoli stems may be peeled and diced. Slice carrots and cut red pepper into 1/4-inch strips. Toss all in bowl.

Nutritional analysis per two-cup serving: Calories: 47. Protein: 3 g. Carbohydrate: 10 g. Fat: 0.4 g. Dietary Fibre: 3 g. Sodium: 33 mg.

Percent calories from: Protein: 21%. Fat: 7%. Carbohydrate: 72%.

Red lentil soup

Makes about eight cups

This soup is simple *and* scrumptious. Red lentils take far less time to cook than green, grey or brown lentils and provide an extremely low-fat source of protein. A serving provides about as much protein as a two and a half ounce burger patty or chicken leg. Instead of cumin, you might like to season the soup to taste with Patak's Mild Curry Paste, which is available at regular supermarkets and Asian stores.

7 cups water

2 1/2 cups dried red lentils

1 large onion, finely chopped

2 to 4 Tbsp. lemon juice

1 tsp. ground cumin

Salt and pepper

Combine water, lentils and onion in a large pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, partially cover and simmer until the lentils have disintegrated, about 30 to 60 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice, cumin (or Patak's Curry Paste), salt and pepper.

Nutritional analysis per cup: Calories: 199. Protein: 14 g. Carbohydrate: 36 g. Fat: 0.1 g. Dietary fibre: 9 g. Sodium: 26 mg.

Percent calories from: Protein: 28%. Fat: 0%. Carbohydrate: 72%.

Vesanto Melina is a dietitian and author of the following nutrition classics: Becoming Vegetarian, the Food Allergy Survival Guide, Becoming Vegan and the Raw Food Revolution Diet. Recipes here are from Raising Vegetarian Children. Vesanto is based in Langley, BC. 604-882-6782, www.nutrispeak.com



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Welcome to Village Vancouver

by Kathie Wallace and Ross Moster

WE ARE a collaborative of community-minded people and neighbours in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland who delight in imagining the possibilities for a just, ecologically sustainable and resilient Vancouver and beyond. Every month, we explore initiatives for sustainable community that are simple, free or low cost, time saving and easily replicable. Get to know us at www.villagevancouver.ca. If you are interested in joining or creating a village in your neighbourhood, contact Ross Moster at rmoster@flash.net.

Neighbourhood villages

We call what we do “village building.” When neighbours start talking to one another, the simple act of connecting leads to all sorts of good things. Artifi-

cial barriers break down and trust and support build. It can start with something as simple as one neighbour hosting a potluck or sharing tools. If you are interested in exploring villages in your neighbourhood, contact Village Vancouver.

Car Free Day block parties

June 14 is Car Free Day. Interested in holding a block party this year? It's easier than you think: just obtain permission from the city using its “sign off” form and secure two to four city-approved barricades. In Kits, see www.carfreevancouver.org/locations/kitsilano/ or contact kitsilano@carfreevancouver.org. For other areas in Vancouver, the Kits site has excellent “how to” information for block parties anywhere or contact Ross Moster. Also visit <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/filmandevents/events/blockparty/>.

vancouver.ca/engsvcs/filmandevents/events/blockparty/

Drop-in spaghetti nights

Imagine announcing to your neighbours that you're going to cook a big pot of spaghetti, provide some salad and garlic bread and they are welcome to join you. Then imagine your neighbours appreciated your gesture so much they decide to do the same thing on another night. Soon, you have a number of places to eat all over the neighbourhood and you're saving time and sharing good food and conversation with interesting people.

Garden in our own backyards

Village Vancouver hosts neighbourhood-based gardening workshops with Roberts Creek's Sustainable Living Arts School founder Robin Wheeler (www.ediblelandscapes.ca). Also see the Sustainable Living Arts School in Vancouver: www.slas.ca. Visit www.villagevancouver.ca for upcoming learning parties in East Hastings, Main St., Riley Park, Fraser, Kits, Downtown, Dunbar, North Van and Coquitlam. New hosts are always welcome.

Neighbourhood food networking

There are hundreds of things we can do in our neighbourhoods around food that promote community based food systems, including canning parties, co-op kitchens, tea stations, sharing compost, pocket farmers/gardeners markets, seed/plant swaps, community kitchens, backyard chickens, honouring elder gardeners, permaculture, urban micro-farming, community gardens/fruit orchards, sidewalk meals, beekeeping, berry picking, neighbourhood co-op freezers, and more. We look forward to hearing about what your neighbourhood is doing.

Broccoli promenades

Community develops around food. A “Broccoli Promenade” transforms streets into a food garden, by using road closures to reconnect food growing to our home kitchens. The garden promenades bring neighbours together, feeding both the gardeners and their neighbours. For more information on creating a Broccoli Promenade, contact d.lafontaine@shaw.ca in Kitsilano.

The Vancouver gardening challenge

By the end of 2009, let's have harvest celebrations in every neighbourhood in Vancouver. These could be the result of creating neighbourhood villages. The first goal is to plant a garden now. Here's a simple way to start a garden: 1) Compost, trench, mound, seed and mulch. 2) Someone knocks on doors until he finds people to share their yard. Someone volunteers to collect compost. 3) Each neighbourhood could dedicate one quarter of its garden to a mono crop for sharing with the larger community. 4) Harvest celebration this fall! From Kathie Wallace, Marpole.

Fork in the Road: cultivating food and community

Last October, the Fork gathering helped participants take concrete steps around the topic: “What would happen if we made a conscious effort to create local food economies in our neighbourhoods



photos: Peter Sircom Bromley

and communities?” Fork participants continue to get together for monthly potlucks. The next Fork in the Road takes place at Langara's Summer School on Building Community, June 15-16. For details, contact Leslie Kemp or Village Vancouver.

Langara's Summer School on Building Community

Langara's Summer School on Building Community runs June 15-25. Enjoy workshops, films, community tours, storytelling and more at this festival of learning. Village Vancouver also hosts a number of programs. For information about VV programming, visit our website or contact Ross. For information about the Langara Summer School, contact Leslie Kemp at 604-323-5981, lkemp@langara.bc.ca or visit www.langara.bc.ca/cs

Details on future topics:
www.villagevancouver.ca

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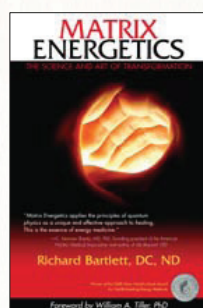


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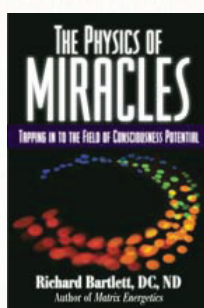
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Giving peace a chance

Recorded June 1st, 1969
40th Anniversary



I had first seen on stage at the Montreal Forum five years earlier. And I opened my eyes and there he is, lying in a bed in front of me, the same man, but everything about him is different. He's not singing songs; instead, he and his wife are patiently putting out one message, interview after interview. They stayed on target: "We're killing the life on this planet, and the responsibility to stop it lies in each and every one of us. Inaction is not an option."

Most of the time I understand we are all such little insignificant beings in the universe. But there was something much bigger than our normal life happening in that room. Being there that night gave you a feeling that you were in a special place, where people who the times had singled out were saying things that needed to be said.

It was just the luck of the draw that I ended up on the recording of *Give Peace a Chance*. There's been a lot of wonderful things that I've participated in over 40-odd years of working with some of the biggest stars in the world, but nothing will ever rival that moment. How could it? I saw some of the writing process behind the song, saw how focused it was. They thought, "Why fool around with more words than necessary here? We've got a message; give them the message." I mean, it's the simplest song in the world. When I was listening to it in the playbacks, I said, "How can they ever release this? It's not a song, it's just a chant." But boy, was I wrong.

Anyone who's been in a studio recording session knows there's nothing more boring than sitting for three weeks doing 2,700 takes on two lines. But this recording was different. I mean, everyone had an instrument of some sort. The Hare Krishna people were chanting and the people in the room passed around a tambourine, but most of it was hand-clapping, or you grabbed something – a couple of people had books, banging them together like cymbals. People were kicking the open sliding door to the next room for that big bass beat. Everything was really cooking. It was a very spiritual moment. And they just kept going and going; it went on and on, take after take, until John was satisfied.

It will never go down as one of his greatest songs, but it'll go down as the greatest message a song ever gave the world – a message that has been understood and chanted by crowds all around the world. Why is the song still relevant? Well, can you think of a more relevant message in today's world? Turn on your television sets, listen to your radio. Watch what's happening around this world. Be horrified. Recoil. Ask yourself how this could have gone so wrong. So if you ask me if the message "give peace a chance" is relevant, it matters more today than it did when John and Yoko sent the original message to the world. We have to say to ourselves: It was a great message then. It could be a greater message today. It's simple: Think of peace and of peace only.

Some nations have an atomic bomb; some nations have all the armaments in the world. John Lennon had his guitar, his voice, his soul and his spirit. We need more like him.



Joan Athey and Gerry Deiter (1934-2005)

Excerpted from Give Peace a Chance: John & Yoko's Bed-In for Peace compiled by Joan Athey. Photography by Gerry Deiter. Edited by Paul McGrath. (John Wiley & Sons Canada Ltd.)

FROM THE very first moment John and I saw each other, we knew something was about to happen – something big. We just didn't know how big. John said about our meeting: "It was bigger than both of us." That was the feeling we both had. When John and I sang Give Peace A Chance from our bed-in in Montreal, we had no idea the song would become an anthem not only for our time, but for generations to come.

It went around the world and made other songwriters realize that you can convey political messages with songs. Millions of people got together and sang the song in different parts of the world at different times. The song connected us and made us realize that we were a power strong enough to change the world. Little did we know that that's when we, John and I, really made our beds for life.

I still remember the beautiful full moon that John and I kept looking at from the bed, after everybody went home. Did anybody think that a man and a woman, a man from Liverpool and a woman from Tokyo, would do something crazy like that together to change the world? Maybe it was written already on a stone on the moon or something. At the time, we were laughed at and put down, in a major way, by the whole world. Now all of us are standing at the threshold of a beautiful new age that we worked hard for. It's not in our hands yet, but we know we will make it happen. Let's make the best of it and have fun. I think John would have been very pleased too.

Imagine peace
War is over, if you want it.
I love you!
Yoko, NYC 2009

by Donald Tarlton
concert promoter, Montreal

PEOPLE GOT into the bed-in for dozens of reasons. I got in because I was a concert promoter and I knew all the rock writers. One of them, Dean Jones of the Montreal Star, called me up and said, "You're not going to believe what's going down. John Lennon is at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. Come on down! Now!"



I said, "Well, there must be a million people there, I'll never get in." She said: "No, everything's fine. Your name's been left at the door." It indeed was and I got up to the 17th floor. I couldn't believe it. I remember coming in the door, and Dean, you know, introduced me to John and Yoko as "our local concert impresario." I was a little timid about the whole thing for the first while, because it seemed like a bit of an intrusion, like I really shouldn't be there. It was a pretty spectacular situation and I looked around and said to myself, "This is surreal. This is some moment." I closed my eyes and brought up the image of the debonair man in the suit who had made the girls scream on the Ed Sullivan Show, the man



Get priorities straight

ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot

Well, maybe it is just the time of year,
or maybe it's the time of man,
I don't know who I am,
but you know life is for learning.
We are stardust.
We are golden.
And we've got to get ourselves
back to the garden.

— from *Woodstock* by Joni Mitchell

IT'S JUNE 2009 and the lyrics above express exactly the way I see things right now; it's both the time of man and the time of year and we've definitely got to get ourselves back to the garden. What's playing out around the planet is an amazing lead-up to a scenario that will force us to get our priorities straight. The good news is that, as the song implies, it simply involves us going back to the garden to learn who we really are.

It saddens my heart to think we have allowed children to forget where food comes from and that people believe that a decent living cannot be made from the land. It's hard to fathom that many people working to feed the world cannot feed themselves because the food they grow is for processing and export. How did agriculture come to be the source of so much negative human impact on the global environment? How could we have allowed soil to degrade to the point where we only have another 50 years' worth of food production from soils on this planet? Something has to change and getting people back to the land, growing their own food in a sustainable way, is a good way to start.

Lately, I've been wandering through my garden filled with joy at the sight of all the blossoms that will soon turn into sun-ripened fruit — cherries, apricots, plums, apples and pears; gratefully, the fig trees survived the harsh winter and are now leafing out. The "berry walk" is full of the promise of loganberries, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries

ORGANICS

and red and blackcurrants to come. The arbour will soon drip with colourful and delicious grapes, kiwis, thornless blackberries, nectar berries, Marionberries and Tayberries.

I've also been busy transplanting long rows of peas, lettuces, leeks and onions, together with kales, chards, spinach and salad greens — arugula, coriander, chicory and cresses. In the greenhouse the "Heat Lovers" tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, amaranth, squash and basil are waiting for it to warm up before being planted out into the garden. Packets of parsnips, beets, celeriac, parsley, dill and turnips and radishes have been ripped open and tidy rows have been seeded in between the lettuces. Tip: Hoe a shallow furrow and line it with a mix of 50 percent screened compost and 50 percent coarse, washed sand before broadcasting the seeds of root vegetables. This helps germination and aids growth in heavier clay soils.

My "Garden of Eden" is a beautiful masterpiece of nature's sheer perfection. I am constantly filled with joy at its pure beauty and harmony, and I am filled with gratitude daily for the generous living I am able to make from it by teaching, saving seeds and selling edible plants to my neighbours. I am especially filled with appreciation for the fact that whenever I am hungry, I can just step outside my door to find fresh food, which is alive and healthy and keeps me connected to nature and a wondrous lifestyle.

Carolyn Herriot is author of *A Year on the Garden Path*, a 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide. She grows "Seeds of Victoria" at the Garden Path Centre, where she teaches "The Zero Mile Diet - Twelve Steps to Sustainable Home-grown Food Production" and "Growing an Edible Plant Business." <http://www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath>

The future of things to come?

Consider this fact; it may get you growing an edible garden even faster: California's heavily irrigated Central Valley, the site of the majority of food production in the state, is currently locked in a three-year drought, with no end in sight. Farmers have been left with dusty fields and dying trees. Food production in the Central Valley has also put so much pressure on the Delta estuary — the source of fresh water for irrigation — that there has been a collapse of the coastal ecosystem where the estuary drains out to sea.

In the US, California produces the following percentages of the country's total: Artichokes: 99 percent. Asparagus: 50 percent. Carrots: 60 percent. Cauliflower: 86 percent. Broccoli: 93 percent. Celery: 95 percent. Lettuce: 90 percent. Spinach: 83 percent. Tomatoes: 30 percent (95 percent of those for processing). Lemons: 86 percent. Oranges: 25 percent.



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Presence is the key

THE POWER OF NOW Eckhart Tolle

Nobody chooses dysfunction, conflict, pain. Nobody chooses insanity. They happen because there is not enough presence in you to dissolve the past, not enough light to dispel the darkness. You are not fully here. You have not quite woken up yet. In the meantime, the conditioned mind is running your life.

Similarly, if you are one of the many people who have an issue with their parents, if you still harbour resentment about something they did or did not do, then you still believe that they had a choice – that they could have acted

unconscious state.

What you say about choice also applies to forgiveness, I suppose. You need to be fully conscious and surrender before you can forgive.

“Forgiveness” is a term that has been in use for 2,000 years, but most people have a very limited view of what it means. You cannot truly forgive yourself or others as long as you derive your sense of self from the past. Only through accessing the power of the Now, which is your own power, can there be true forgiveness. This renders the past powerless and you

When you surrender to what is and so become fully present, the past ceases to have any power. You do not need it anymore.

Presence is the key. The Now is the key.

differently. It always looks as if people had a choice, but that is an illusion. As long as your mind with its conditioned patterns runs your life, as long as you are your mind, what choice do you have? None. You are not even there.

The mind-identified state is severely dysfunctional. It is a form of insanity. Almost everyone is suffering from this illness in varying degrees. The moment you realize this, there can be no more resentment. How can you resent someone's illness? The only appropriate response is compassion.

So that means nobody is responsible for what they do? I don't like that idea.

If you are run by your mind, although you have no choice, you will still suffer the consequences of your unconsciousness and you will create further suffering. You will bear the burden of fear, conflict, problems and pain. The suffering thus created will eventually force you out of your

realize deeply that nothing you ever did or that was ever done to you could touch, even in the slightest, the radiant essence of who you are. The whole concept of forgiveness then becomes unnecessary.

And how do I get to that point of realization?

When you surrender to what is and so become fully present, the past ceases to have any power. You do not need it anymore. Presence is the key. The Now is the key.

How will I know when I have surrendered?

When you no longer need to ask the question.

Adapted from The Power of Now, copyright 1999 by Eckhart Tolle. Reprinted with permission of New World Library, Novato, CA, 800-972-6657 (ext. 52). Visit www.eckharttolle.com

Editor's Note from Joseph Roberts

This column is the final monthly instalment of Eckhart's first book *The Power of Now*. It has been a joy to carry Eckhart Tolle's message to our ¼ million readers in print, and others via commonground.ca. *The Power of Now*, Eckhart's first book, published originally by Namaste Publishing, deservedly became a bestseller and inspirational companion for readers, including me. Eckhart visited my office when *Common Ground* was on Broadway where we would chat and meditate. I was fortunate to be the first person to review *The Power of Now*, and *Common Ground's* review was used to get other media attention, including Harpo Productions, Opera's company. I appreciated Eckhart Tolle's work now as I did then. *Common Ground* looks forward to offering more inspiration to you, our loyal and precious readers. Now its time for you to tell us what inspires you. Thank you. editor@commonground.ca.

Deep Powerful Change!

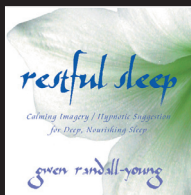
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Global or ego crisis?

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

SPIRITUALITY

If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it, and this you have the power to revoke at any moment. – Marcus Aurelius

AS I WRITE this, a world struggling with economic upheaval is now facing a flu pandemic. It seems that for the past year or so, the dominant themes have been fear, loss and lack of control. What a challenge

That is all well and good until ego's own world is threatened. Then it is a different story. Maybe we will lose our house and have to rent. Maybe we won't be able to do all that travelling in retirement as we had planned. Maybe we won't even be able to retire. Could ego sit and complain about these things while facing a mother whose baby is dying of starvation?

This is not to say we should start giving half our income to those less fortunate, although some would be good. What it is saying is that these "difficult

.....
These "difficult times" may be reminding us to be humble. We are blessed with richness in our lives. We are not entitled or somehow more deserving.
.....

for ego. All of its buttons are being pushed.

Here in the West, our lives have been blessed for a long time. We can take clean water for granted. Food, clothing and shelter are manageable for most. We have the luxury of playing with our food. When I read articles about exotic recipes and novel ways to prepare food, I often wonder what starving people in Third World countries would make of them.

We have access to medical care, immunization and anti-viral drugs. We need not fear for our families the way other people do in countries that are at war or challenged by warring forces within. So it is natural that we feel we have a fair bit of control over our lives. Then, suddenly, even though we invested wisely and took good care of our health, due to forces beyond our control, our financial future suddenly looks significantly different than we had planned and a potentially life threatening virus is making its way around the world.

All of this serves to awaken us to how much we take for granted and to our sense of entitlement. As difficult as things might become for us, it will still be nothing compared with the suffering of the people in underdeveloped or warring countries. It is far too easy to think of these people as belonging to another world – a world that is far away and disconnected from ours. Poverty and illness is the misfortune of their birth. We, on the other hand, are lucky. Or so we like to think. Ego likes to keep us separate like that.

times" may be reminding us to be humble. We are blessed with richness in our lives. We are not entitled or somehow more deserving. We need to be thankful and full of gratitude when times are good, and determined, strong and resilient when they are not.

I recently watched the movie *Doctor Zhivago* again after many years. It moved me then and it moves me now. Life was painful and full of struggle, fear and uncertainty. At one point, Lara says to Yuri, "This is a terrible time to be living." Yuri responds, "Well, if our days are numbered, we must make the most of them." Rather than focusing on all that was wrong, he chose to make something good of what little they had.

As well as focusing on all that is good in our lives, this may also be a time to reach out and offer help and support to those struggling around us. Ego tends to get so wrapped up in its own drama that it can forget that others are suffering too, maybe even more than we are.

Ironically, it seems that in times of tragedy or great suffering, the highest and best of the human spirit emerges. Perhaps these difficult times are here to serve us in our ongoing evolution.

Gwen Randall-Young is a psychotherapist in private practice and author of Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution. For more articles, permission to reprint and information about her books and "Deep Powerful Change" personal growth/hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca



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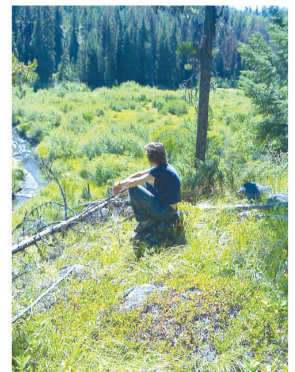
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KIM ASHLEY is a certified life coach and PhD candidate in east-west psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, specializing in nature and imagination. She trained as a vision fast guide at the School of Lost Borders.



KAREN REMPEL holds a master's degree in ecopsychology from Naropa University, and trained as a vision fast guide at the School of Lost Borders. She is a Reiki master, registered yoga teacher, and member of the Wilderness Guides Council.

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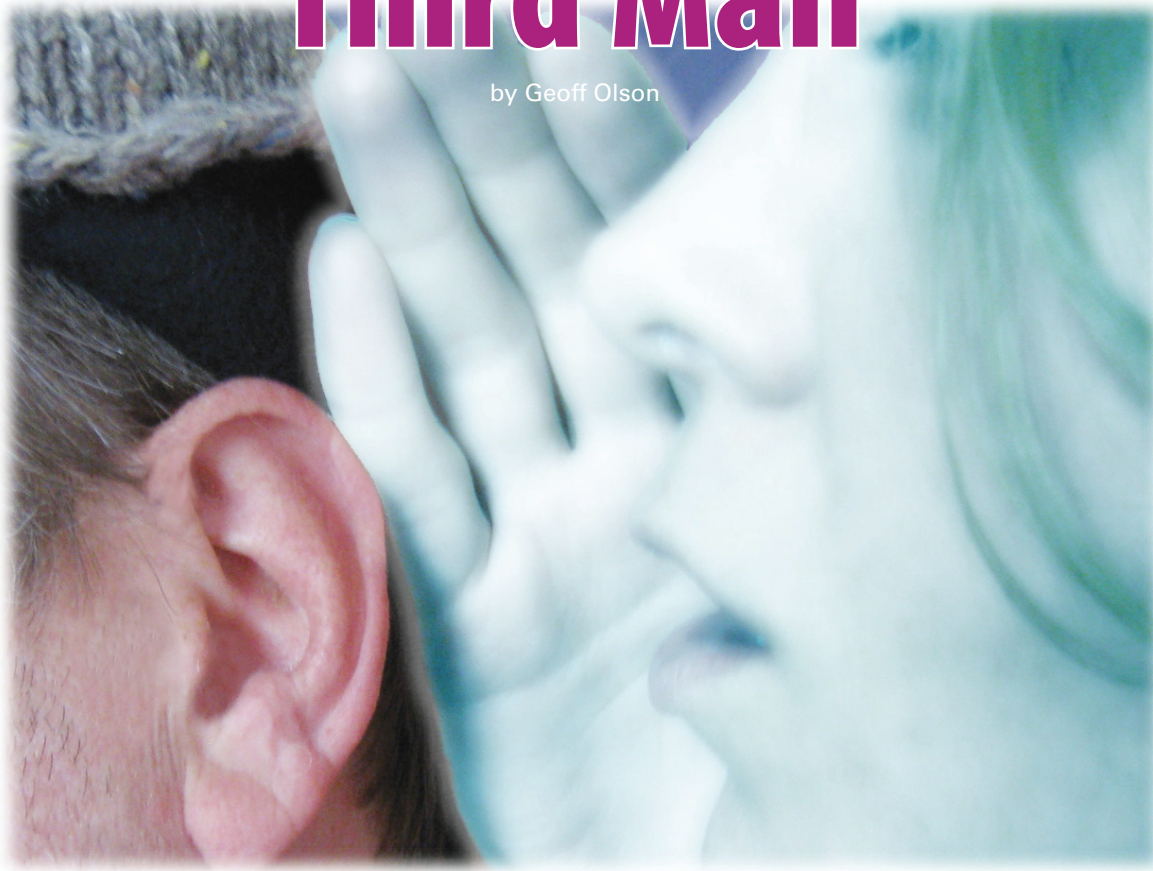
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The *Muse* and the Third Man

by Geoff Olson



Survivors of near-death experiences attest to a mysterious helping presence. Is it mysticism or science?

IN THE LATE seventh century BC, the Greek poet Hesiod was tending his flock of sheep on the slopes of Helicon, a mountain in central Greece when the Muses came upon him. They “breathed into me a divine voice,” he wrote in his *Theogony*, and taught him a glorious song. “They have made Helicon, the great, God-haunted mountain, their domain.”

To some classicists, Hesiod’s words were more than stylistic devices – he was describing what, to him, was a real experience. The Muses, the Greek gods of arts and literature, were said to have the power to “inspire” – a word meaning, literally, “a God within.”

In today’s world, the Muses have been downsized to “the muse,” a wan, poetic expression for creative inspiration. It’s now just a turn of phrase, a cliché, although some artists and writers have confessed to having the spooky feeling that they are the vessels, rather than the executors, of their best work.

However, there is another muse-like phenomenon that persists into the modern age, although it’s connected more to issues of survival than self-expression. Pilots, mountaineers and “extreme athletes” are said to have encountered this mysterious presence in moments of great danger or at the brink of death. The presence, often perceived of as a voice, offers assurance and also counsels persistence in the face of overwhelming odds.

In her 2008 book *Explorers of the Infinite*, British Columbian author Maria Coffey investigated what she refers to as “the secret spiritual lives” of extreme

athletes and adventurers. “All the extreme adventurers in my book spoke of a ‘sixth sense’ that comes from being keenly attuned to the environment they are moving through,” she writes.

A legendary account of spectral guidance was supplied by Ernest Shackleton, after his 1914-1917 Endurance-Expedition across Antarctica to the South Pole. The problems began when Shackleton’s ship became trapped in pack ice, only a few days after the first sighting of the continent of Antarctica. The ship drifted with the floe for several days and then sat frozen in place throughout the dark Antarctic winter. Shackleton ordered his men to abandon the ship. A harrowing encounter with the elements ended with a 36-hour trek, with only a stretch of rope and ice axe to assist them. It was an incredible feat of endurance, one that amazes mountaineers to this day, Coffey notes.

“I know that during that long and racking march,” Shackleton wrote, “it seemed to me often that we were four, not three.” Shackleton had the unmistakable sense of being guided by an unseen presence. His story supplied the inspiration for a passage from T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*:

*Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle,
hooded I do not know whether a man or a woman –
But who is that on the other side of you?*

Hence the term, the “Third Man factor,” after Eliot’s poem. In his 2009 book of the same name, author John Geiger says he’s tracked down 110 stories of people in states of extreme danger, or near death, who felt they received guidance from a sensed presence, including a survivor of the World Trade Centre collapse, who received instruction from a spectral voice on how to escape with his life intact.

Geiger writes of climber James Sevigny, who experienced the phenomenon after an avalanche swept him a distance of 600 feet and left him with a broken back, scapula and arm and shattered facial bones. He awoke to find his climbing companion dead beside him, at which point he lost hope and decided to join him. But a presence encouraged him to persevere and offered him help. Whatever it was, this presence accompanied him all the way to the base camp, where he received medical attention.

While researching her book, Coffey uncovered a similar pattern of stories. She learned that many extreme athletes have experienced life-changing spiritual experiences along with the difficulty of sharing them with friends and family. Yet surprisingly, a few of the people profiled in her book welcomed these extreme states of mind and have even since put themselves in mortal danger to access them again.

In her book, Coffey tells of an experienced ice climber, Clay Hunting, whose climbing companion fell 150 feet, along with tons of ice. With his companion seriously injured, Hunting had to hike many miles through

a canyon for help. “The strangest thing was when I was hiking out I had a small, blue light in front of me the whole time. It wasn’t my headlamp. It was a blue light. It led me out. I don’t know what it was but there was no way I could have got out as fast as I did without its help. Every so often, I would stop and turn off my headlight and look for that blue light. It might be a bit higher up or lower, or to the left or right and I would follow it.” Without the blue light to guide him, Hunting is sure his friend would have died.

Coffey believes these bizarre experiences are often mediated through three conditions: fear, suffering and focus. Fear is something all extreme athletes must confront, at one time or another. Suffering comes with the territory. Focus means prolonged attention on a single task.

It’s no accident that desert-bound mystics, shamans in training and yuppies on vision quests have employed some or all of these factors to access obscure corners of the soul. The act of focus, which sweeps away mundane, day-to-day thoughts, seems to anchor the seeker in the present, while suffering and fear alter one’s physiological and neurochemical states. This combination of psychic conditions appears to open a window into archetypal realms of experience.

In the 22nd hour of his trans-Atlantic flight, fighting to stay awake, Charles Lindbergh suddenly perceived spectral forms in the cabin that encouraged him to stay awake, offering navigation help. They stayed with him until he reached the Irish coast, Lindbergh claimed.

He later wrote of his experience: “The fuselage behind me becomes filled with ghostly presences; vaguely outlined forms, transparent, moving, riding weightless with me in the plane. I feel no surprise at their coming. There’s no suddenness to their appearance. Without turning my head, I can see them as clearly as though in my normal vision. These visions were emanations from the experience of ages, inhabitants of a universe closed to mortal men.”

Of course, it may not be such a surprise to see strange things after 22 hours without sleep. Scientists have long known that sleep deprivation can crowbar the dreaming mind into waking consciousness.

Pilot Dick Rutan completed the first nonstop flight around the world in 1986. In 1979, during an extended flight in an experimental plane, an elf appeared on one of the wings. The elf communicated that Rutan had fallen asleep and crashed into a mountain, and could now relax. A spacecraft with “little gray men” pulled alongside, while airplanes in his wake were looping about in dogfights. All this was accompanied by “beautiful, loud organ music.”

“I don’t believe in any spiritual crap,” Rutan told Coffey. But he did note that he had been in the air for the same length of time as Charles Lindbergh on his epic voyage.

In Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, a stressed-out Ebenezer Scrooge dismisses the ghost of his former colleague, Joseph Marley, as a “piece of undigested potato.” Dickens was drawing a link between biochemistry and boundary experiences, while gently mocking his central character’s reductionism. But, of course, we’re not talking about fictional dreams; we’re talking about the experiences that happen to real people. But how “real” are their experiences, scientifically speaking?

Coffey quotes climber Carlos Carsolio, a Mexican climber who told her how he was guided through a terrible storm down K2, the world’s second highest peak, with the help of the “spirits of the mountains and the ghost of a climber who had perished on its slopes.” In seeking his “moments of extended reality,” Carsolio has scaled 14 of the world’s tallest mountains without oxygen. So are we talking about hallucinations resulting

from oxygen-starved brains? Is the muse turbocharged by hypoxia?

It’s no accident that “God-haunted” mountains have been implicated so often in mystical experiences, the author learned. The leaders of the three great monotheistic religions – Moses, Jesus and Mohammed – all had revelations on mountaintops. Prolonged exposure to high altitudes is linked to prefrontal lobe dysfunctions. The author speculates that the endorphins released by strenuous climbs might lower the threshold for temporal lobe epilepsy, “which might in turn evoke such experiences.”

Above 18,000 feet, thought perception and function become increasingly impaired, and above 28,000 feet, hallucinations are common, according to tests conducted on Himalayan climbers by British doctors Michael Ward and Jim Milledge.

Canadian neuroscientist Michael Persinger is famous for his brain studies using a modified football helmet, in which electrodes stimulate the brain’s temporal lobes. When both the right and left hemispheres are stimulated, Persinger’s subjects often report an unnerving “sense of presence.” To Persinger, these reports imply that, under certain conditions of neural excitation, the dominant hemisphere – where the sense of self and language is located – can interpret activity in the normally “quiet” hemisphere as the presence of another self. (In right-handed people, the left hemisphere is dominant; the opposite is true for left-handed people.)

Persinger’s studies give some indirect support to the ideas of Princeton psychologist Julian Jaynes. In 1977,

Author John Geiger says he’s tracked down 110 stories of people in states of extreme danger, or near death, who felt they received guidance from a sensed presence, including a survivor of the World Trade Centre collapse, who received instruction from a spectral voice on how to escape with his life intact.

Jaynes made a splash with his book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. The unwieldy tome belied a revolutionary thesis: that our modern form of consciousness is only a few thousand years old. In prehistoric times, people perceived the voices generated by the non-dominant hemisphere as the voices of the gods, Jaynes insisted. They were often directed by this “inner voice” to go about their daily tasks.

Is the Third Man factor the evolutionary hangover of this bicameral mind – a sort of vermiform appendix of consciousness? Is this the source of the muse of Hesiod, whose voice had faded even by the Greek poet’s time?

Yet vocal hallucinations aren’t all that uncommon in the modern age: A whopping 10 percent of people claim to hear voices in their lifetime and most of these experiences aren’t psychotic. Nor should we forget the common phenomenon of “imaginary friends” of young children, and, of course, the mocking voices of paranoid schizophrenics. The muse may not be as far away in time or space as we think.

The ideas of Persinger and Jaynes also link to the mysterious phenomenon of what Stanford psychologist Ernest Hilgard called “the hidden observer.” In his experiments with hypnotized subjects, Hilgard determined there was some aspect of the self that remained independent of the hypnotic state. It seemed to have a greater level of awareness than normal waking consciousness. Is the muse no further than our non-dominant cerebral hemisphere, or some other part of the brain?

Coffey herself remains agnostic about the scientific

versus spiritual interpretation of such altered states of consciousness, or even if the two are mutually exclusive. She cites British scientist Rupert Sheldrake and his suggestion that memories can exist outside the nervous system in a “morphic field” of extended consciousness. In this view, the brain is the hardware that accesses a non-local software within the morphic field, and would account for psychic experiences in which people access information they couldn’t otherwise know.

During a recent appearance in North Vancouver, I asked Coffey if the people profiled in her book could make a distinction between a straightforward hallucination and visionary experiences of greater spiritual authority. “A lot of scientists I talked to argued it’s all hypoxia, and maybe it is,” she responded, adding that we should pay attention to what the experiencers themselves think. For example, Carsolio knew the exact moment that his climbing partner had died on another part of the mountain and felt her spirit guide him to safety. “For him, it’s not just about lack of oxygen, it’s that zone between life and death, when you’re very, very close to death; the magical moment when he could break through into something else, where he felt he could access some other level of consciousness and speak with the dead,” Coffey writes.

Coffey has very good reason to doubt materialistic explanations for all such experiences; she has had her own tragic encounter with the unexplained. In fact, it became the inspiration for her book. Twenty years ago while her husband was away on his last expedition, attempting Everest’s then unclimbed Northeast Ridge, Coffey took a rock-climbing course with some of their

friends. While sharing a room in a hostel one night, as she dreamed she was “running down a village street, wailing and distraught,” her friends recalled her sitting upright in bed and crying out, “Joe’s dead!” She later learned that her dream had occurred only hours after her husband was last seen on Everest.

There was also the moment, days after his death, when she sensed her husband’s presence during a car trip with a friend. While she said nothing about it when it happened, the friend later told her she had experienced the uncanny feeling of Joe’s presence at the exact same time.

The common stories of premonitions of death in the mountaineering community, and the sudden awareness of the loss of a friend or relative, supply some of the most striking anecdotes in Coffey’s book. The skeptical appeal to “coincidence” or “subconscious cuing” seems laughably insufficient in these instances.

For some, stories about the “Third Man” or the “muse” will forever remain superstitious mumbo-jumbo, or at best, REM sleep gone wild. For others, these experiences are part of some spiritual commonwealth, in which the veil between the living and dead momentarily lifts.

Those seeking a rapprochement between science and spirituality believe there may be an explanation in “morphic fields,” in which observer and observed are joined in a vast ontological drama, which science has yet to decode. For others, like this writer, it all makes for a fascinating mystery.

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Meditation as healing technology

by Andrew Vidich, PhD

THREE DECADES ago, when I began my meditation practice, I was often viewed as someone out of the mainstream and/or belonging to an Eastern cult. Today, with more than 200 studies having been done on the practice of meditation and its connection between spirituality and health, the tables have turned almost 180 degrees. Wherever I go, people are practising meditation as a means to improving their health and overall well-being.

Right now, we are in the midst of a global shift in consciousness that recognizes the healing power of consciousness itself. To achieve maximum health and happiness, we need to reconnect to the source of our being, or consciousness, which is responsible for the health of the body, mind and spirit. Instead of feeling connected and sustained by this source, as long as we remain disconnected, we more often than not feel spiritually adrift and bankrupt and the result is a plethora of spiritual ailments, including depression, anxiety, fear, doubt, hurry and worry, agitation and restlessness – all symptoms of our real dis-ease, which is spiritual emptiness.

The fundamental illness we all suffer from is a severe case of mistaken identity. We have forgotten who we are and we have become completely identified with our body and mind. Meditation is the process of reconnecting to the greater consciousness within, which is our true identity. This process of reconnection is characterized by distinct healing properties: It liberates the mind from habituated, reactive, conditioned thinking. It brings us fully and completely into the living present – moment-to-moment awareness. It moves us from selfishness to selflessness and from me and mine to thee and thine. It reconnects us with higher vibratory energies and expanded consciousness, sometimes called unity consciousness.

Why is meditation effective? Because as we proceed on the spiritual journey, we are increasingly able to subdue and eventually control our desires. What then arises is an increasing ability to consciously control our thoughts. We have little idea about what is going on in the thought processes of our mind. In fact, brain researchers say we have over 60,000 thoughts per day. Most of these thoughts are largely unconscious, below the level of our awareness. Our minds are like an overgrown jungle with wild animals prowling all around.

On an even subtler level of thought, Buddhists call the uncontrolled mind-stream “the five unskillful states of

mind,” namely: 1) Fear and worry. 2) Restlessness and agitation. 3) Doubt and uncertainty. 4) Depression and disappointment. 5) Anger and resentment. If we examine our lives honestly, we see how familiar these unskilled states of mind are. We have become so habituated to “unthinkingly” thinking these thoughts that, over time, they cannot help but spill over to influence our words and actions. We have become so identified with these thoughts that we think we *are* them. We fail to realize that we have a choice in how we think and feel.

Meditation shines the light of awareness into the jungle of our thoughts. When light shines in the darkness, the darkness disappears. All the wild animals run for cover, not wanting to be discovered. The light of awareness dissolves these uncontrolled states. The more we come into contact with the self-luminous presence within, the more awareness we bring into our being. Each meditation sitting, if done with full attention and sincere intention, can potentially open the floodgates of inner luminosity, bringing greater clarity, insight and peace. Wherever the sun of divinity shines, the darkness of desire is dispelled.

Not only is the practice of meditation a powerful tool in cultivating a deep inner connection with our spirit, it makes us more emphatic and caring, alleviates stress, decreases cholesterol and heart disease and increases our overall health. Meditation has proven to be a powerful tool in treating a variety of chronic and acute diseases.

Even more importantly, from a spiritual point of view, meditation is the key to our becoming more conscious and compassionate beings, filled with abiding states of joy and happiness. It is not an overstatement to say that meditation is rapidly becoming the 21st century “technology” for palliative and clinical care and one of the most powerful tools for personal transformation.

Dr. Andrew Vidich is the author of Light Upon Light: Five Master Paths to Awakening the Mindful Self. He is also an editor, international speaker and educator who lectures and presents experiential workshops globally.

Free seminar, July 1, 7pm: Dr. Vidich presents “Discover the Source: Finding True Peace, Joy and Inner Wisdom Through Meditation,” hosted by Science of Spirituality Eco-Centre, 11011 Shell Rd, (at Steveston Hwy) Richmond. For information, call Linda: 604-985-5840. www.sos.org

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Climate solution fest

EARTHFUTURE Guy Dauncey

ENVIRONMENT

DEAR FELLOW citizens of British Columbia:

Now that my government has been in power for almost a month, I feel compelled to report on an urgent reality that received little real debate in the election.

I will come straight to the point. I am talking about global warming. Since taking office, I have been handed many reports, many labelled "urgent."

Some merited the title, especially those on homelessness and affordable housing, but even these pale into insignificance next to the report on global warming.

I am not going to debate the science, for it has become abundantly clear that the debate about the causes of global warming is over. Any continuation will only delay the action that is so urgently needed.

ing parts of Richmond, Delta, Tsawwassen, Surrey, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, the Vancouver airport and BC's entire marine shipping infrastructure along the banks of the Fraser.

How should we respond? This is the question that has kept me awake at night. It has become clear that the goal adopted under the last government – a 33 percent reduction in our carbon emissions below 2007 by 2020 (10 percent below 1990) – is nowhere near enough. In the lead-up to the Copenhagen climate conference this December, the call is for a 40 percent reduction below 1990 by 2020.

As British Columbians, we live in one of the most advanced societies in the world. We should not sit back and

We could create market incentives to produce sufficient electric and plug-in hybrid electric cars.

During the election, we argued the merits of a carbon tax versus cap-and-trade. Both are important, but neither is sufficient to the urgency of the crisis.

Let me be clear. Because of the world's continuing use of fossil fuels, our planet is on a warming trend that may see temperatures rise by 6° C by the end of this century. The last time the planet was this warm was during the Permian period, 251 million years ago, when 95 percent of all species became extinct. Most ecosystems took between four and 30 million years to recover.

If we continue burning fossil fuels and destroying our forests, farmlands and grasslands, most of the world's coastal cities will be submerged by the end of this century. A third of the planet's land area will be uninhabitable desert. Most agriculture will cease and most humans who survive will become refugees, desperately seeking a new place to live.

US Secretary of Energy Dr. Stephen Chu told the *Los Angeles Times* recently that 90 percent of California's Sierra snowpack could disappear, eliminating the water storage that is so vital to agriculture. "We're looking at a scenario where there's no more agriculture in California. I don't actually see how they can keep their cities going... I don't think the American public has gripped in its gut what could happen."

Here in BC, unless we build a sea wall three metres high, most of the Lower Mainland will be under water, submerg-

hope that some other country will take the lead.

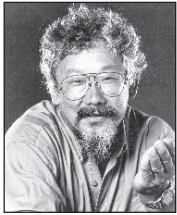
As your government, we can dream up big policies. We could allow only the purchase of zero-emissions vehicles after 2020 and hopefully incentivize the market to produce sufficient electric and plug-in hybrid electric cars. We could require that every new building be zero-carbon, starting in 2016, as Britain is doing. We could close down BC's coal, oil and gas industries, using your dollars to compensate the companies and retrain their workers.

Unless there was widespread consensus that such measures were needed, however, they would soon become political footballs, their merits lost in the storm of partisan debate.

The wisest way forward, therefore, is to ask you, my fellow British Columbians, what we should do. To that end, we are launching a three-month festival of imagination, ideas and solutions, designed to make BC a zero-carbon society by 2030, both domestically, and as much as possible, for our imports and exports too.

I am not the incoming premier, but if you send me your ideas, I will reprint the best of them in this column and on the BCSEA's website, and I will also forward them on to the real premier. Please send them titled "Festival of Climate Solutions" to guydauncey@earthfuture.com

*Guy Dauncey is president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association.
www.bcsea.org*



US sets high standards

SCIENCE MATTERS David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

LAST MONTH, Barack Obama completed his first 100 days on the job as US President. During that brief period, his administration acted to reverse many of the failed and destructive policy decisions of his predecessor, George W. Bush. President Obama is giving the American people hope that positive change is possible. If only we were offered the same kind of hope in Canada.

The US president has rejected the

time. Scientists are united in their belief that the planet is in the midst of a biodiversity crisis on par with earlier mass extinction events in the Earth's history. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, some 16,000 known plant and animal species are currently threatened with extinction.

Some scientists believe the effects of climate change alone could result in the premature extinction of 15 to 37 percent

Some 550 other species, including caribour and killer whales, are wasting away in legal purgatory while the feds dilly-dally.

rigid dogma of previous US leaders in moving to loosen restrictions on Cuba and offering to engage in peaceful dialogue with Iran. He has injected billions of dollars into science and overturned the Bush administration's ban on embryonic stem-cell research in an effort to return the nation to its historical leadership role in scientific inquiry and discovery.

On the environmental front, he has appointed an outspoken advocate of ocean conservation to head the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, signed into law the protection of more than two million acres of wilderness and made clear his intention to combat climate change, including a willingness to force automakers to produce more fuel-efficient and less-polluting cars.

Obama's commitment to implement the US Endangered Species Act has received far less attention. Earlier this year, the US government restored key endangered species protections that were stripped away by George Bush in the waning days of his administration. In particular, President Obama has reinstated rules that will ensure that government decisions receive independent scientific scrutiny before they are allowed to proceed. In announcing the change, President Obama stated, "With smart, sustainable policies, we can grow our economy today and preserve the environment for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren."

The president's support for the Endangered Species Act signals a 180-degree turn. Under George Bush, the US did just about everything in its power, including breaking the law, to eviscerate this critical piece of environmental legislation, enacted, ironically, by another right-wing republican, Richard Nixon.

President Obama's support for the legal protection of endangered species couldn't have come at a more pressing

of species within our children's lifetime.

Sadly, our own government leaders have not come close to matching President Obama's leadership on endangered species. Canada has had legislation protecting endangered species for six years, but our government has failed to implement the law, known as the Species at Risk Act, according to a report card recently released by the David Suzuki Foundation and its allies.

The report found that only one animal, a tiny snail the size of a kernel of corn (it lives in a few hot springs in an existing protected area), has received the full conservation measures required under the Species at Risk Act. At the same time, some 550 other species, including caribou and killer whales, are wasting away in legal purgatory while the feds dilly-dally on completing and implementing recovery plans necessary to prevent their extinction.

When it comes to environmental problems, such as climate change and species extinction, the attitude of our "leaders" here in Canada seems to be that we have plenty of time before we have to act. But as our neighbours to the south are finally beginning to realize, that's not the case. The more we delay, the more severe the problems will become and the more difficult it will be to address them. Our own survival depends on the planet's ability to provide us with clean air, water and food. We must act now. And, yes, we can!

Links

Obama quote: www.ens-newswire.com/ens/mar2009/2009-03-03-094.asp

DSF/Allies Report Card (SARA): www.davidsuzuki.org/files/SpeciesAtRisk_April29.pdf

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First Past The Post mortem

The referendum turned education into a contest and subverted the work of the Citizens' Assembly.

by Peter Sircom Bromley

ON MAY 12, British Columbians voted against a new system of proportional representation by a majority of 61 percent to 39 percent. Yet less than half of BC's eligible voters showed up at the polls, meaning that less than a third of BC's electorate rejected a proposal that might have made such displays of apathy and imbalance a thing of the past.

Where were all the other voters? Some have speculated that they were more concerned about the playoff fortunes of the Vancouver Canucks than the pros and cons of some arcane government regulation. Not hard to believe – but maybe a little hard to accept, especially if you are partly to blame. Provincial elections are now permanently set to occur every four years during the spring playoff season; when questioned about this after the May 12 vote, Premier Campbell was reported to have said, “I think people are quite capable of dealing with hockey and an election.”

But this wasn't just an election. The concurrent Referendum on Electoral Reform was about a complicated governance issue. The public required unbiased, non-partisan information in order to make an important decision. People were offered an opportunity to improve how things work.

And God knows there's a lot to improve. While our transportation and communications systems have developed with staggering speed in the last hundred years, we continue to organize our civic affairs in a way unchanged since the days of the horse and buggy. Voting, the singular act that props up government, has remained a primitive instrument while social issues have become multi-faceted and complex. While voting is a sacred right, it also seems to have become a sacred cow.

Since World War II, more than 70 countries worldwide – including Norway, Ireland, Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Austria, New Zealand and Germany – have developed and adopted systems of proportional representation to help modernize the way they govern themselves. There was a recognition that voting systems can contribute to problems in the political system. If British Columbians have any interest in following suit, they will need a better understanding of the forces that affect social change. It might help to review some of the key events that carried us through this latest attempt at electoral reform.

Politics as usual

After two bitter BC election results in 1996 and 2001, the provincial government admitted that the first past the post voting system had some clear disadvantages, most notably that majority governments could be elected with a minority of votes. Gordon Gibson, a prominent author and former politician, was therefore appointed to find a way out of the conundrum. Gibson proposed setting up an independent body to make recommendations on electoral reform. An assembly of *randomly selected* citizens, two from each of the province's 79 electoral districts, would study the issue and come up with a solution. His recommendations were adopted, and in August 2003, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform was created.

The Assembly held public hearings every second weekend for 11 months, examined the fairness, representation and proportionality of the current voting system. They and came up with a “made in BC” single transferable vote (STV) system. Party politics were absent from the discussions and the social and geographic realities of BC were taken into account.

The Assembly's recommendations were put before the people in a referendum on May 17, 2005. At that time, the Referendum Information Office, a branch of the Ministry of Attorney General, was responsible for informing the public about the new voting system. Although the system was complicated in certain ways, 58 percent of eligible voters and a majority in all but two of BC's 79 ridings cast their ballots in favour of proportional representation.

The numbers, however, fell just short of the required 60 percent. Those who had actively promoted fair voting in BC were perturbed. Sixty percent is a rather high proportion considering that the 1995 Quebec referendum – which could have split up the country – only required 51 percent. In 1993, a referendum in New Zealand approved of electoral reform by a margin of just over 53 percent.

Four months later, the government of British Columbia pledged to take action on the close result in the Speech from the Throne. A throne speech is typically

drafted by the premier, with the assistance of high-level ministers, deputy ministers and staff. It's essentially a business plan, laying out a general vision along with a budget. The speech announced another referendum, acknowledging that “a solid majority” supported proportional representation. It then went on to discuss what it called a “troubling” issue: why had so many people voted to change the electoral system?

“...and yet that was not enough to pass, according to the rules this Legislature unanimously established. Your government has been clear that it does not intend to rewrite those rules after the fact, or pretend that the vote for STV succeeded when it did not.”

Interesting choice of words. Substitute the word “recognize” for “pretend” and we might see a crack forming in the stone tablets. Is there a note of defensiveness here? Were the results of the referendum making our political leaders question the rules? Were the premier and his associates concerned about the constitutionality of setting the bar too high at 60 per cent?

Whatever the reason, a clear preference for politics-as-usual could be surmised when the throne speech went on to say how public education would be improved in preparation for the next referendum: “Equal funding will be provided to support active information campaigns for supporters and detractors of each model.” According to sources at the premier's office, the idea was “to stimulate debate.” Evidently, many other politicians agreed. In due course, the idea to fund “active information campaigns” was tabled, passed *unanimously* by the Legislative Assembly and enshrined in Section 4 of the Electoral Reform Referendum Act.

Let the games begin

What happened next represented a sharp shift in approach, one that distinguishes the 2009 referendum from the first one. Whereas the neutral Referendum Information Office handled the task of public education in 2005, two opposing advocacy groups – British Columbians for BC-STV, and the NO-STV Cam-

paign Society – would now each be given \$500,000 to run what the government called “information campaigns,” supposedly to complement the work of the Referendum Information Office which also received \$500,000. The two groups – now with clearly defined partisan roles – were expected to come up with their own campaign strategies. In other words, public debate would be played out like a kind of sporting event. The task of education would be combined with the tactics of winning.

Some of those who volunteered with British Columbians for BC-STV were *alumni* of the Citizens' Assembly. For them, it must have appeared that months of non-partisan work would be subsumed by the very political machinations everyone had managed to avoid earlier.

For the few who volunteered with NO-STV, things were looking up. NO-STV was an updated version of KNOW-STV, a group that opposed the single transferable vote in the 2005 referendum. KNOW-STV was a bit of a rag-tag group in 2005. Revitalized, and with \$500,000 to play with, NO-STV had experienced leadership. The organization would continue to be led by Bill Tieleman, a skilled political strategist, communications professional, and former communications director in the BC premier's office.

As the referendum campaign lurched into gear, it looked like the pro STV team might coast to an easy win. In mid-March 2009, Angus Reid conducted an online poll indicating that 65 percent of British Columbians, especially younger voters, supported proportional representation. There was a sour note in the festive news, however. The same poll revealed that only 44 percent of British Columbians were aware of the referendum.

Meanwhile, game plans on both sides were being developed, reworked and implemented on the fly. And the plans were very different. It seemed that BC-STV organizers were not clear on the concept of social marketing, a discipline that uses methods similar to advertising but which, out of necessity, focuses on unbiased, clear information. Social marketing audiences just need the facts. So it might not have been a good idea for the BC-STV campaign to use a cartoon super hero theme that trivialized the rather sober issue of social reform. Their slogan may also have been ill advised. “Power up your vote” skewed the concept of proportional representation, a system that simply makes all votes count; it doesn't give voters special *continued p.34...*



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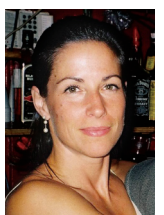
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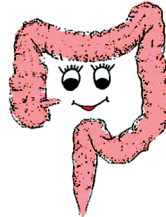
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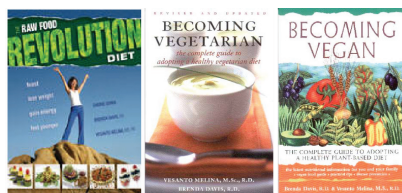
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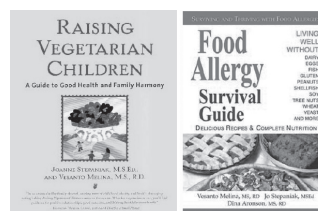
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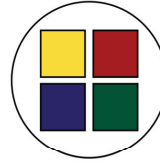
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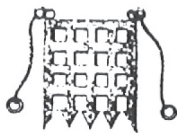
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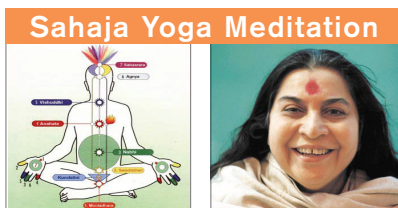
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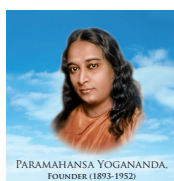
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Canada needs an innovation agenda

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In the 2009 Federal budget, the Conservative government pledged to commit \$225 million over the next three years to provide broadband to unserved communities. In contrast, Australia, which has a similar geographic breakdown to Canada, is reportedly committing AU\$4.7 billion to a similar initiative. Not only is the Conservative's commitment relatively weak, it also does little to get Canadians hooked up to next generation networks.

Canada lacks what it needs most – a national plan. A new approach could put Canada on a path to a "New Deal" for broadband – a path to a better Internet for everyone, for free speech and open innovation.

Real competition

A national broadband plan should necessarily include the creation of real competition in ISP markets, which means

creating a plurality of ISP ownership types, including municipal and community/non-profit ISPs. The fiber-to-the-home networks appearing in countries like the Netherlands and Denmark are often developed in partnership with local municipalities or utility companies. Municipalities, utilities and community organizations should be encouraged, and in some cases publicly financed, to enter the Internet service market.

Municipal governments are especially well positioned to inject much needed ISP competition. University of Toronto professor of Information Studies Andrew Clement points out that municipalities "have many critical assets, including significant financial resources, control over rights of way, as well as experience in developing and operating other complex, capital-intensive infrastructures, such as roads, waterworks, and transportation systems." In fact, many municipalities own high-speed fiber networks that they can utilize relatively easily for Internet service provision.

Models that work

Within our borders, we have workable models for Internet provision – Fredericton, New Brunswick's municipal/co-op ISP is a great example. In 2001, Fredericton's city council created e-Novations,

its own fiber carrier. Fredericton later launched the Fred-eZone wireless network offering free connectivity across the city. Fredericton now provides access to its fiber backbone and a city-owned organization handles installation and general services.

The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) named Fredericton one of the Top Seven Intelligent Communities of 2007. ICF presents the award to "communities or regions with a documented strategy for creating a local prosperity and inclusion using broadband and information technology to attract leading-edge businesses, stimulate job creation, build skills, generate economic growth and improve the delivery of government services."

Open access

Another way to increase ISP competition is to mandate Bell and other network operators to provide open access to independent ISPs, making these telecom companies more like utility companies rather than Internet gatekeepers with competing services. Bell is fighting the open access option tooth and nail and has even resorted to lobbying the federal Cabinet to overturn the existing, relatively weak equal access rules.

According to Teksavvy, if Bell's lobbying efforts are successful, it will "inher-

ently all but remove unlimited Internet services in Ontario/Quebec and potentially cause large increases in Internet costs from month to month." The ramifications of this would have Bell and other big telcos increasingly calling the shots in terms of how much independent ISPs are allowed to offer their customers, thereby further strangling those that compete with Bell's own Sympatico service.

The time is right

With the world economy in a slump, now is the time to mandate net neutrality and open access and to replicate municipal ISP models that work in cities and towns across the country. This will create jobs in the short-term, while also sustaining social, cultural and economic innovation in the long-term.

On July 6, the CRTC is holding a hearing on "traffic management." In lieu of a viable national plan, Canadians should tell the CRTC to support the open Internet and an innovation agenda. Get involved at <http://saveournet.ca>

*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for the Campaign for Democratic Media. steve@democraticmedia.ca

Countdown to Copenhagen

BEFORE THE economic levees burst, letting loose a wave of bank failures and bailouts, it seemed like the future of the planet was actually of vital importance to politicians. But, as the recent sidelining of climate change at the G20 meeting indicated, politicians are now bent on firming up the old world order, rather than having any real interest in laying the foundations for a low-carbon future.

It doesn't bode well. *The Guardian* recently polled 250 leading climate scientists, of which only 18 thought governments were doing enough to prevent temperatures from rising higher than the target of 2C above pre-industrial levels and most thought temperatures would rise by 4C by the end of the century.

In December, we'll get a better sense of what substance lies behind the green rhetoric when the nations of the world meet to broker a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Accord at the two-week Copenhagen Climate Conference.

UK filmmaker Franny Armstrong

(*McLibel* and *Drowned Out*) believes Copenhagen may be our last chance. Her latest film, *The Age of Stupid* (www.ageofstupid.net) offers a realistic vision of what the world will look like if action on climate change doesn't happen soon.

Part documentary and part drama, the film stars Pete Postlethwaite (*Brassed Off*) as the last man alive in a devastated world in 2055. London is under water and Sydney has been destroyed by fire. As he reviews footage from 2008, he asks why we didn't do more to halt climate change when we had the chance. Interwoven with this futuristic fiction are six individual documentary stories, including an Indian entrepreneur starting up a low-cost airline, an 82-year-old French mountain guide who has watched the rapid melting of local glaciers and a wind farm developer fighting local lobby groups in England.

The indefatigable Armstrong has assembled a team that has created as much a movement as a movie. From the start, the film had an unconventional path to pro-

duction. It was "crowd-funded" by selling shares to disparate groups and individuals, and it has been released through both traditional and theatrical channels, as well as via a multitude of grass-roots vehicles in the UK. It had a solar-powered, low-carbon world premiere in London's Leicester Square in March, with simultaneous screenings across the UK. Critics have praised its passionate tone, animations and handling of subject matter. We may have to wait until the fall before we get a chance to see the movie in Canada, but you'll no doubt hear more about it before then. Watch this space.

In *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), Al Gore suggested that we have "just 10 years to avert a major catastrophe." That puts us in the timeframe of an earlier ecological disaster movie, *Soylent Green* (1973). Charlton Heston plays a cop solving a sinister conspiracy in an overpopulated world being baked by the greenhouse effect (the term "climate change" had yet to be coined). Gas-guzzlers clutter the streets of Manhattan in 2022 (no

FILMS WORTH WATCHING

Robert Alstead

sea level rises in this dystopia) and people pedal bicycles to generate electricity. The seventies-style futurism is strangely reassuring (and entertaining). We've come far; even a Hollywood formula movie like *The Day After Tomorrow* is capable of providing potent images of how nature can turn on us. Hopefully, politicians will have the vision to act too.

Toronto's Hot Docs, the biggest documentary film festival in North America, finished last month with a 42 percent increase in attendances over 2008. The opening film, *Act of God*, is about the metaphysical effects of being struck by lightning. Jennifer Baichwal, the Toronto filmmaker behind the visually eloquent *Manufactured Landscapes*, questions the randomness of such an event through seven lightning-strike stories. Intriguingly, Fred Frith, renowned guitar improviser, personally demonstrates the ubiquity of electricity in our bodies and the universe. (Opens June 5 in Vancouver.)

www.youneverbikealone.com

Datebook

1st Annual

Festival of India

Jhalak Jhankar Jalwa

June 27, Noon - 9pm
Holland Park,
100th Ave/King George Hwy
Surrey

Near King George Skytrain station

The Sanskriti Cultural Awareness Society of BC is proud to present this free inaugural cultural extravaganza, a blend of multi-dimensional and multi-ethnic presentations that connect today's modern world with the wonders of 5,000 years of civilization and ancient traditions. In its wonderful objective to promote cultural harmony, festival highlights include presentations from numerous states of India. People of Indian descent from India, Nepal, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, East Africa, South Africa, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Britain will be presenting their arts and crafts exhibitions, food stalls, traditional clothing and unique cultural traditions. There will also be classical & Bollywood dances, singing and instrumental recitals to fill your heart with joy. Come out and enjoy this festive family event for the whole day. Free parking at SFU Surrey Campus across the street from the festival. Visit www.humarisanskriti.ca Email naman@humarisanskriti.ca or call 604-767-4366 or 604-783-5352 for more information. Rajesh Chawla and Sanjeev have volunteered their time to help organize this event.



Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival celebrates its 20th Anniversary season in Vanier Park to Sept. 26. Check www.bardonthebeach.org for details. [photo: David Blue]

JUN 5-7

Basic ThetaHealing Certification Workshop

in Vancouver with Loretta Mohl. Information: www.CanadianCollegeofHealingArts.com Call: 780-910-5052 Or email Loretta@CanadianCollegeofHealingArts.com

JUN 7

Full Moon Festival of Humanity: Join us for a presentation and group meditation for world service. Presentation 3pm, Sunday, YWCA Hotel, 733 Beatty, CANFOR Room. Donations gratefully accepted.

Meditation for Planetary Peace on the Full Moon, Sunday June 7th, at 7:30 PM. 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm

June 12-14

Adyashanti on "The Journey of Awakening" a weekend retreat including recent satsangs on DVD; at the Swanwick Centre in Victoria (Metchosin) -www.swanwickcentre.ca

swanwickcentre.ca contact swanwick@shaw.ca or 250-744-3354.

JUN 13

Raw Food Chef Certification! Our fundamental course teaches how to go raw and make delicious meals! 2-6pm \$150 Call: 778-839-8424. Max 8 Students. www.rawteacher.com/missjanice

Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle: Sat. June 13, 7-10pm. Journey the 'Dreamtime' for insight/healing with your Nature Spirit guardians. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254, W. 7th. Donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604-418-9636. www.shamanichealing.info

JUN 20

Wolfsong Chanting Circle - Summer Solstice Celebration: Sat. June 20, 7-10pm. Participate singing shared sacred healing chants from the Spirit of the Land. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254 W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604-418-9636. www.shamanichealing.info

JUN 21

Shine: Didjeridu Master In concert, 7:30pm @ Trinity Church, 1805 Larch st. Kitsilano. Tickets \$20 @ Banyen. Shine_like_thesun@hotmail.com

JUN 25

Raw Food Chef Certification! Our fundamental course teaches how to go raw and make delicious meals! 6:30-9:30pm \$150. Call: 778-839-8424. Max 8 Students. www.rawteacher.com/missjanice

JUN 25, 27 & 28

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Investment \$945. Call 778-839-8424. www.rawteacher.com/missjanice

JUN 27

Festival of India - Free. 12-9pm, Holland Park, near King George Skytrain station, Surrey. Enjoy music, dance, bollywood & classical Indian and lots of yummy food. Ph: 604-767-4366. www.humarisanskriti.ca

JUN 27-28

Raw Food Instructor Certification- Do What you love! Extensive gourmet meals, sprouting, dehydrating, coaching. Opportunity to teach, have own business & website. 11am-7pm \$795 Prerequisite: Raw Food Chef Certification (June 13 or 25) www.rawteacher.com/missjanice Call: 778-839-8424.

JUN 27-29

Silent Retreat: An opportunity to recharge, re-balance and discover the peace within at the Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre, Sunshine Coast. Personal retreats can also be arranged at any time. www.selfrealizationcentrecanada.com 1-604-740-0898.

JUL 1

"DISCOVER THE SOURCE: Finding True Peace, Joy & Inner Wisdom through Meditation" with Andrew Vidich, PhD. For info on this FREE seminar, contact Linda: 604-985-5840 or lbaggat@telus.net

JUL 10

Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30pm \$10; Course \$325. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. www.pacificreflexology.com

SEPT 5

FaerieStar Chakra Circle: Four year program. Commitment by semester. Awaken your Chakra System through the Magick of the FaerieStar. www.faeriestarchakras.webs.com

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SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic: 6-10pm. One hour sessions \$18. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

WEDNESDAYS

Hawaiian Medicine Circle 7pm Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks. \$10 donation. At Hale Ola, 1215 Madison Avenue, Burnaby. 604-431-7474 Call Kamu Kaimana

FRIDAYS

"Destiny Dialogues" Free Talks First Friday of each month, experiential evening that explores the inter-connections between destiny and suffering, relationships, vocations, joy, teachers, character, nature, family, dreams. 7-9pm. 604-317-1613.

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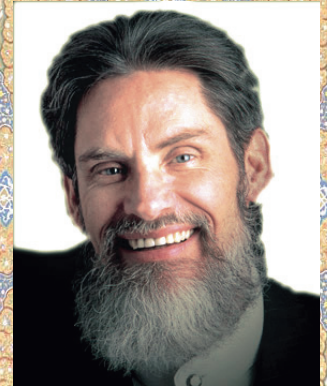
VOLUNTEERS

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...FPT Post Mortem - from p.22
super-hero powers.

For its part, NO-STV presented its case against the single transferable vote in straightforward terms. Its website featured a banner with smiling, ordinary people. However, its message played on fear and ignorance. One of its main arguments was that the new system would be too complicated. It made a highly misleading comment about how votes would be unaccountable, saying, "You may never know where your vote went." To emphasize its point, NO-STV cleverly presented a rather amateurish video produced by the Citizens' Assembly. The information in the video was good; presentation was not. Point scored by the no side. Perhaps NO-STV's most effective strategy was to use television and large print advertising just days before the referendum. Their slogan "don't take a chance with British Columbia's future" sowed seeds of doubt but conveyed nothing of substance.

It was left to the Referendum Information Office to provide information in a way that would allow people to make an informed decision. It placed a few newspaper ads and had a website. The website provided a quick comparison of the existing and proposed voting systems and had links to the Electoral Reform Referendum Act and to the BC-STV and NO-STV campaigns. Perhaps they thought that was enough. Was there more? Not sure. One thing is for certain: the Information Office had a low profile.

A non-partisan issue

In the final analysis, achieving electoral reform in BC – or anywhere for that matter – is as much about the way the issue is perceived and handled as it is about the issue itself. And bringing change to government seems to require an extra, and perhaps unnecessary, level of effort and debate. Other kinds of social change, such as the replacement of typewriters by desktop computers, happen all the time. People adjust. What's so precious about a voting system?

New Zealand's experience with proportional representation was no less difficult than ours. It had similar numbers and was hotly contested, but unlike BC, New Zealand had a two-step referendum: one in 1992 and one in 1993. The first allowed voters to decide if they wanted a change and, if so, which type of proportional representation they would prefer. A year later, the second referendum allowed voters to decide between their old first-past-the-post system and the new system chosen in the first referendum. Turnout for the first referendum was just over 50 percent, but the result was 84 percent in favour.

The second referendum brought in proportional representation with just 53.4 percent of the vote, a plurality of five percentage points less than that achieved in BC's first referendum. New Zealand also had special interest groups campaigning for and against reform. However, voters were treated to

a massive non-partisan government-run information campaign. The difference between success and failure seems to have been a lower bar and a higher level of education.

In BC's case, one million dollars divided between two partisan groups could have been better spent by the neutral, and experienced, Referendum Information Office. If we are to grant free speech to special interest groups, then voters at least need to be literate about the subject at hand. According to Dennis Pilon, a political science professor at the University of Victoria, the quality of information delivered to the public was not only poor, but there also wasn't enough of it. A damning enough assessment in itself. But there was also a basic lack of understanding of process set in motion by the premier's office, followed without question through the Legislature and followed with resignation by those who supported positive change. After all the expense, time and effort put into the work of the Citizens' Assembly, the rug was pulled out and the issue divided into opposing camps. The referendum was run like a contest rather than an educational process.

And to some, it seemed unacceptable that, in order to win, the yes side required 60 percent of the vote. In a *postmortem* letter to his fellow campaign workers, BC-STV organizer James Douglas Roy wrote that his group "played by the unfair, blatantly self-serving and illegitimate rules set down by the same political establishment that *benefits* from the current electoral system."

Social reform is, and always will be, a non-partisan issue. It can be dramatic, especially if there are extremes of opinion involved, but it has to be handled dispassionately and with respect for due process. Differences of opinion can't be left to the tactical skill of one side or another. If there are legitimate reasons to doubt the value of the single transferable vote, and if the Citizens' Assembly's recommendations need a fresh perspective, then revisit the issue and broaden the scope of the debate.

Proportional representation is not a new idea. It has been around for more than a century and since the Second World War has come to dominate European politics. It's not perfect, but it can be fine-tuned as it is put into practice – an important point to remember. And it is certainly more democratic and inclusive than a voting system based on good guy/bad guy, winner-take-all values.

Partisan contests are fun if you're a hockey fan. Definitely not fun if you're serious a voter.

Peter Sircom Bromley has worked as a journalist, designer, writer and art director. He also fulfilled the role of communications consultant with the non-profit sector for 10 years and served on several boards, including the Sierra Club of BC and the Stanley Park Ecology Society.



On Track Zodiac

JUNE 2009 Adrien Dilon



ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)

A leopard cannot change its spots, but it can turn habits into rewarding experiences. Sometimes, you don't change life, but it changes you. If it is ludicrous to remain in the past while living in the present, don't be economical with the truth.



TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)

Sometimes, you just have to sit like a frog on a lily pad and do virtually nothing. More than ever before, you may feel like recharging your batteries away from the proximity of other people. Take in the sights and smells from a different vantage point and regroup.



GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)

How many identities does one need to fulfill the many facets of one's being? Perhaps even two sides can't offer enough channels to cater to your multitudinous desires and cravings. The pressure to break through self-perceptions may be reaching a breaking point. You are, however, about to "flower."



CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)

Words and ideas will fly from your tongue as inspiration ignites your creativity. You aren't willing to submit to any notion that would have you doing anything less than exactly what you intend. Your belief in yourself is demonstrated now. Nail your colours to the mast.



LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)

If you can take the seriousness out of your day-to-day activities, a huge weight will be lifted and the struggle will dissolve. The riddle wrapped inside the knot of illusion will be stamped out and a lotus flower will grow in its place. As your lungs breathe in new possibilities, you can smell the freedom.



VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)

As the masters of utility now convene with the goddess of practicality, you will be able to get much accomplished. Sometimes, a Saturn influence upon your Sun sign can give you immense courage and sustainable energy. Hit the ground running, hot on the heels of your next adventure.



LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)

You may feel a tender touch from the benevolent ones – the silent, yet powerful, brethren who place miracles at your feet without staying long enough for you to comprehend what has just occurred. You can progress by "standing on the shoulders of giants."



SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

If you should fall into the arms of another or your inner passions rise and fall, choose to completely dive into the experience. It is possible you will want to feel the natural – and maximum – high of sensuality. Turn on the full scope of personal luxury. Love can create a frequency of fearlessness.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Try to have the utmost patience with yourself. Perhaps you cannot see the forest for all the trees in front of you. The truth will be revealed to you in time about why you made the choices you did. Stay tuned to your intuitive, feeling nature and soon enough you will know the "why."



CAPRICORN (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

You may find the way you usually think about reality is being blown into bits and creating a number of questions. Along with Stephen Hawking's theory of the possibility of a universe with 11 dimensions, delving into the world of science could open new doors for you.



AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)

The need to trust is paramount. When you take responsibility for yourself, inner dependence deepens your self-reliance and gives you strength. Notice how every decision based on personal, sound judgment creates within you an unbreakable bond. Commit.



PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)

In your world, life has a magical realism. After an arduous, challenging few months where you may have felt much discontent, you've decided to change what you feel is within your power to change. Already making decisions for the coming year, you discover simplicity is the key to great comfort.

Adrien Dilon is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 34 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing, adrien.dilon@gmail.com.

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Naseem Gulamhusein, Yoga Teacher Training Program Coordinator

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